

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information:
Prevent Blindness
Sarah Hecker
(312) 363-6035
shecker@preventblindness.org

Leading Cause of Blindness Affects Millions, Costs Billions

***--Direct Medical Costs from Cataract Cost the U.S. Economy
\$10.7 Billion Annually—***

CHICAGO (May 22, 2014) – Cataract is the leading cause of blindness worldwide, and there are more than 24 million Americans age 40 and older who have cataract in the United States alone, according to the [Vision Problems in the U.S.](#) report from Prevent Blindness. Cataract is a clouding of the eye's lens which blocks or changes the passage of light into the eye.

The recent "[Cost of Vision Problems: The Economic Burden of Vision Loss and Eye Disorders in the United States](#)" report found that at \$10.7 billion, cataract is the second costliest vision disorder (behind refractive error) and the most expensive medical diagnosis. Direct costs include medical costs for diagnosed disorders, medical costs attributable to low vision, medical vision aids, vision assistive devices and adaptations, and direct services including special education and assistance programs.

Prevent Blindness has declared June as Cataract Awareness Month to educate the public on cataract, risk factors, symptoms and treatment options, including surgery. Free information is provided through its dedicated web page at preventblindness.org/cataract, or via phone at (800) 331-2020. For those interested in conducting discussions or seminars on the subject, Prevent Blindness also offers a free online module on cataract including a PowerPoint presentation with a complete guide as part of its [Healthy Eyes Educational Series](#).

The exact cause of a cataract is unknown. Most often, a cataract is part of getting older. With age comes a greater risk of developing a cataract. There are also several possible risk factors for cataracts, such as:

- Intense heat or long-term exposure to UV rays from the sun
- Certain diseases, such as diabetes
- Inflammation in the eye
- Hereditary influences
- Events before birth, such as German measles in the mother
- Long-term steroid use

- Eye injuries
- Eye diseases
- Smoking

“The best thing we can do to protect our vision is to get regular eye exams,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “We can also save our vision by maintaining healthy lifestyles like eating leafy green vegetables, exercising and quitting smoking. All we do to benefit our overall health can benefit our eyes as well!”

For free information on cataract, please call Prevent Blindness at (800) 331-2020 or visit the Prevent Blindness website at preventblindness.org/cataract. For information on insurance benefits, including Medicare coverage, free facts can be found at <http://www.preventblindness.org/health-insurance-and-your-eyes>.

About Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org or facebook.com/preventblindness.

###